

The first concept was more frustrating than anything else. This concept was the fact that by observing a system you changed it. More specifically, for sub-atomic particles the act of measuring the particle changed it from its natural state. This is because a second particle must be made to collide with the first particle and

THE MT VOID

Page 2

then be collected to acquire the desired information gathered about the first particle. Unfortunately, this action throws the first particle out of its original state. Thus, we are in effect observing a particle different from what it was before we came along and measured it.

The second concept made me feel genuinely uncomfortable. This was the idea of time delay. Suppose that someone next to you is speaking to you. You are not seeing or hearing them instantaneously. Instead, after a slight delay you see the image of them speaking to you. Then a little bit later you hear the words that they said that go with the image of them speaking. Your senses don't notice the delay because they are not sensitive enough to. To perceive the effect first-hand, go to a park and watch two people playing catch from a couple hundred feet away. If you watch and listen carefully you will first see the ball land in one of the player's gloves, then after a short delay you will hear the sound of the ball hitting the glove.

Ultimately, I discovered the reason why these two items affected me so profoundly. The reason was that both of these are examples of how limited our senses really are. This limitation to our senses had never been driven home to me before. So, when it finally was, it came as a bit of a shock. Suddenly, the "reality" that I perceived around me wasn't as fixed as I had always thought.

It is this concept of reality as a product of our limited senses that Ursula LeGuin examines in T_h_e_L_a_t_h_e_o_f_H_e_a_v_e_n. In the novel,

the main character (George Orr) has dreams. Sometimes his dreams change reality. No one else notices because when reality is changed so is everyone's memory of it. History has always been this way to them. It is when some people are made aware of

George's ability and become able to see the changes also that the story begins. The consequences of this knowledge and its effects on these people is weaved into an amazing narrative.

In short, READ THIS BOOK. Then come to the Lincroft discussion on it. You can come to the discussion even if you haven't read the book. (I never read the books we discuss). [-njs]

2. I want to thank Nick for the above in particular because of the scientific implications. Let's take the second one first. The further away something is, the more the time delay in observing it. Let's say I am looking at Star X. I don't really see star X at all, I see only what star X was like a long, long time ago. That is frustrating. Star X may no longer be in existence. I could live with that but the second concept is the real mind blower. That says I cannot observe Star X without affecting it. Just by observing Star X, I am changing it. Now, bringing the two ideas together, just by looking at Star X I am changing a star that may have gone out of existence millions of years before I was born.

THE MT VOID

Page 3

Such a star cannot be changed today, it isn't around to be changed so I am actually changing the past by observing Star X.

This is all leading to one of my (many, many) pet peeves: the misinterpretation of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle and using that misinterpretation as a philosophical truth. I am not aiming this at Nick; there are many people who I think have the same interpretation. That interpretation of Heisenberg seems to show up a lot. Heisenberg did not say that observing an object changes that object. If you can just look, unaided, you are only picking up photons that were passing your way anyway. You may affect the photons, but they are not the object. If, however, you have to create a situation where photons go past your eyes carrying information about an object and they would not otherwise be doing that, then you may have to affect the object. But then it is not the observation that is changing the object, it is whatever else you are doing to make the object observable. I would claim Heisenberg put theoretical limits on observability, which is vastly different from proving you cannot observe objects without affecting them. To paraphrase the National Rifle Association, observations

don't change systems, streams of particles (and other things) change systems.

Comments by responsible spokesmen of the opposing point of view are welcome.

3. Recently I reviewed a baseball film and commented that I was not a big fan of baseball. Sort of like saying the Ayatollah is not a big fan of the writings of Rushdie. I do sort of respect the game as sort of the modern interpretation of a classic story. It just sort of repeats the story over and over:

The Young Man starts at home. Home is a modest place, perhaps even a hole in the ground. The Young Man yearns to travel, to win himself glory out in the real world. But a Young Man must prove himself against an enemy before he leaves home. He watches as his friends try to prove themselves, some succeed, some fail. Finally he gets his chance. He does prove himself, turning the enemy's own attack against himself, and the Young Man begins to travel in the world. But out in the world he finds his problems are not over. There are dangers lurking on his travels. There are places of security also, but it is temporary only and in time he always must move on. Virtually everyone he meets is a potential enemy. His goal, he discovers, is just to return to the home where he started. He does, bringing glory to himself and riches to his people.

Now the story enters a new phase. Our hero is no

longer a young man acting on his own, brash and aggressive. Now he is a man of the Community. He commands a position of respect. He is a piece of a larger machine. It is his task to defend the Community against those who would attack it. Our hero, no longer the Young Man he was, never realizes that he has become the danger that some other Young Man -- a young man who is much like he used to be --

is now facing. Things have come full cycle and he has become what he has initially tried to overcome.

I admit that it is a good story. The final irony is certainly poignant. We have in it adventure, the story of the rebellion of the younger generation, the value of community values, lots of timeless themes. It is a play one can see performed more than once, several times, perhaps. For a while, each time you see the story you can get something else out of it. Perhaps some people perform better than others in the role of the hero as Young Man. Others are very good as the Defender of the Community, who from another point of view is also the Danger the Young Man must overcome. But don't you eventually realize that you are just seeing variations on the same story hundreds of times a season?

4. The Club library in Middletown has acquired Lois McMaster Bujold's Hugo-nominated F_a_l_l_i_n_g_F_r_e_e and the anthology F_u_l_l_S_p_e_c_t_r_u_m, which contains four Hugo-nominated pieces of short fiction. These complete the Hugo purchases the Club can afford to make (having already purchased Orson Scott Card's R_e_d_P_r_o_p_h_e_t and Bruce Sterling's I_s_l_a_n_d_s_i_n_t_h_e_N_e_t). William Gibson's M_o_n_a_L_i_s_a O_v_e_r_d_r_i_v_e is not yet available in paperback, and C. J. Cherryh's C_y_t_e_e_n is a trilogy in paperback, making it prohibitive in cost to our budget. (Members in other locations need only ask the librarian to send them whichever they want to read.) [-ecl]

Mark Leeper
MT 3D-441 957-5619
...mtgzx!leeper

Leaning over backward is an inherently unstable position.
-James White